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VIII. LETTER FROM H. LOBDELL, M. D., MISSIONARY AT MOSÛL,
RESPECTING SOME RECENT DISCOVERIES AT KOYUNJIK.

Prof. GIBBS— *Mosûl, Turkey in Asia, Jan. 5, 1854.*

My Dear Sir :—I have to-day made a visit to Koyunjik, the mound in the ruins of Nineveh opposite Mosûl, where Mr. Layard formerly exhumed some finely wrought sculptures; and it occurs to me that you may be glad to know something of the recent most interesting discoveries that have been made in an opposite part of the great mound, as well as a few facts regarding excavations in general in Assyria in these days. You are aware that Koyunjik (Little Sheep) stands on the western face of the ruins, somewhat north of midway from the two extreme points of the great enclosure, which is between four and five miles in circuit.

Nebbi Yunus is a little South of Koyunjik, but still remains almost intact, from the superstitious dread of the Mohammedans of disturbing the repose of Jonah, to the lofty *jam'eh* over whose tomb the Moslems go every Friday in great numbers from Mosûl, a mile distant, to pray. Helmy Pasha, the present governor of this district, did excavate somewhat in that mound last year, and found several large bulls and human giants, much injured by fire, and a few small antiques; among other things, a bronze lion on one side of which was an inscription which Col. Rawlinson reads: *Esarhaddon—the conqueror of Misraim and Cush*. Other inscriptions are said to assert that this mound of the prophet was built by captive women, and that of Koyunjik by men, from Babylonia.

The Pasha's object in setting his manacled prisoners to work in a cellar, where one of the bull's heads was accidentally discovered, was to find gold, and he instructed his overseers to search carefully under the feet of the bulls for treasure! None appearing, he desisted; the inhabitants refused permission to the English and French to continue the explorations, and the antiquities of Nebbi Yunus are likely to be for some time yet undisclosed.

A company has recently been formed in London for the purpose of excavating in the mounds of Lower Mesopotamia and Assyria, entirely independent of the British Museum, though it is expected they will work under the charter granted Mr. Layard and his patrons, which allows the removal to England of all objects discovered.

The French are obliged to offer the Sultan one-half of all they find, and a late attempt of Mons. Place, the French Consul in Mosûl, to raft some fine bulls and winged human figures to Baghdad and Busrah, was opposed by the Pasha on the ground that he had not given the Cabinet of Antiquities lately opened in Constantinople an opportunity to take the share due to the Turkish Government. These

large slabs were drawn from Khorsabad, about twelve miles distant, on a cart built by the Consul expressly for the purpose in the strongest manner, the wheels being about twenty inches in diameter, without spokes, by some three hundred Arabs for whom harnesses were made to order. The blocks now lie on the eastern side of the Tigris, under rude mud coverings which were built to prevent the sulphate of lime of which they were composed, from speedy decomposition. Sandstone was sometimes used for bulls in Nimroud, but gypsum was the common material, and this soft marble is susceptible of being most delicately wrought. It is easily worn by water, and even the rains of this hot climate are sufficient to decompose it very rapidly. It is only the immense mass of earth above the Assyrian sculptures which has preserved them from age to age.

It is presumed that permission will be given to Mons. Place to remove the sculptures, which are destined for the Louvre, as application has been made to the French ambassador at the Porte, who is now in quite as good standing at Constantinople as Lord Stratford, and in fact wields almost as much power as the Sultan himself.

Mr. Loftus, who was recently attached to the Commission appointed to run the boundary-line between Turkey and Persia, as geologist, passed through Mosul a few days since on his way to Baghdad, in charge of the expedition fitted out by the newly formed English company. He expects about £20,000 to be placed at his disposal, and, with the advice of Col. Rawlinson, he will first lay open some of the sarcophagi in the great series of mounds at *Werka*—by some supposed to be the Ur of the Chaldees—and then explore various other *tels* in Mesopotamia. Should nothing of great interest be found there (you know that but few sculptures have ever been discovered in Babylonia, as gypsum-quarries are wanting there), he will come northward and continue the excavations so auspiciously begun by Layard and vigorously prosecuted by Rawlinson. The latter was just about to cease operations for the British Museum, and to send home the artist, when a discovery was made which promises to be not inferior to any made by Layard. The Colonel has not till recently had great success in excavating: a few slabs were found at Nimroud, some bricks, and ivory and copper utensils, with one or two basalt obelisks, well broken in pieces; and some large earthen cylinders, said to be of considerable interest, as at least one hundred years older than the sculptures of Nimroud, belonging to the time of Tiglath Pileser, turned up at Kalah Sherghat. Small books—blocks of a light colored clay, finely written over with arrow-heads—have been found in considerable numbers at Koyunjik, enough, indeed, to form quite a library, with vases, scarabei, cylinders and seals; but it was not till last week that anything of special interest was exhumed. I shall presume that you will be glad of a detailed ac-

count of so much of the new palace as has been laid open, since Rawlinson will not publish anything on the subject for some time to come. It will give me pleasure to communicate to you the result of further excavations, which, it is presumed, will now be prosecuted with considerable vigor, instead of being brought to a speedy close, as was anticipated.

Mr. Loftus has suggested the idea that the palace discovered by Layard was merely *an upper story* of the grand building, and that, were Koyunjik levelled to the plain, there might be found a lower and even grander series of sculptures. The experiment has not yet been made, but the entrances to both the palaces discovered were at quite an angle of elevation. That of the new palace, which is within about twenty rods of the north-eastern corner of the mound (Mr. Layard's was at the south-western corner), is a gentle inclination, the sculptures rising from the depth of fifteen feet below the surface to within eight or ten feet. There are some reasons for rejecting the supposition of a series of rooms still beneath, but it is to be hoped the question is destined to find a settlement.

Many of the slabs at the northern entrance of the N. E. palace have been broken, but most of the pieces retain very distinct outlines of the figures cut upon them.

Two large rooms have been fully opened. One is about sixty feet in length and twelve in width. The sides are faced with slabs about five feet high and four or five wide. The floor is laid with blocks of sandstone about sixteen inches square. Passing down the right side of the entrance from the North, the execution of the figures on the first three slabs at once gives the impression of a beauty and finish seldom seen in ancient art. Each slab bears four eunuchs about two feet and a half long, with bows in the left hand and well filled quivers slung to the back, facing the entrance. They wear well laced greaves, richly trimmed tunics with plain bodies, and well curled hair. One walks behind the first three, apparently to supply them with arrows. The fourth slab has the remains of a chariot from which the king's entire body has been torn, whether by the ruthless hands of a conqueror, or by the power of fire, is not clear. From the fact that numerous other figures of kings remain in this palace, and from the fact that some of the adjacent slabs are broken in pieces, or entirely decayed, it may be inferred that this hero came to a more natural end than did Sennacherib, whose nose and hands were hacked off in Layard's palace. To the bent pole of the chariot are attached two eunuchs, between whose heads rises the extremity of the shaft in the shape of the head of a horse. Two other eunuchs have their faces turned toward the carriage, apparently to guide its movements, while their feet, in spite of the laws of nature and of perspective, are represented moving in the opposite direction with the rest of the

band. Doubtless these slabs illustrate the mode in which the monarch used to take his morning-ride! Quite a vacancy occurs in the slabs on both sides of the main entrance, from this point; but numerous broken bits with heads of men and horses, beautiful borderings of vines and flowers, painted bricks, eunuchs with jars on their shoulders and birds in their hands, show that the vacancy is the work of time.

The long room into which this entrance leads is taken up with the delineation of a lion-hunt—such a hunt as makes one think of Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord.

The first slab I came to bore a fine lion with a shaggy mane and tail, pierced with four arrows. Beneath him were two horsemen, one bearded, and swinging a three-pronged switch over the head of his richly caparisoned steed, the other a eunuch who, with outstretched arm, is pointing toward another lion, who is soon shot and made to sprawl upon the earth with three barbed arrows running half through his body, while still another lies, on the next slab, writhing on his back. Next appear two lions, one above the other, dying, while one huger than all is jumping upon the chariot of the king, which is driven by an officer with flowing beard, guiding his single horse with three pairs of reins. A second dignitary in the square chariot of state pierces the game with a spear; a eunuch shoots an arrow; while the king, a much larger and finer figure than the rest, forces his heavy spear into the lion's head.

He has on a conical cap, surrounded by a rich tiara, ornamented bracelets, and a splendidly-wrought tunic, bearing on the breast, or back, as his position admits, between two circles, the symbol of the Assyrian religion—the adoration of the sacred tree—two human figures, priests or kings, standing one on each side of the vine, beneath the circle from which peers the head and arms of Deity.* These religious emblems are all delicately wrought in a space an inch and a half square, and remind the observer of the royal cylinders which are sometimes offered for sale by dervishes in Mosul. (I intended to send you herewith a tracing of this scene, but it is not yet completed.)

Beneath the horse of the chariot is a prostrate lion. The next stone shows a lioness on her back, shot through the nose by the king

* See Laurie's "Dr. Grant and the Mountain Nestorians," p. 290; "Nineveh and its Remains," *title page*, and "Babylon and Nineveh," pp. 160, 606 et al. This figure abounds at Nimroud, and is found on many small cylinders. It is in fact the Assyrian symbol of Deity and his worship. Dagon, winged human figures with the bodies of bulls, or other hideous combinations, may stand in the place of the king, or customary priest, beneath the head and body of a man within the circle, and on either side of the sacred tree; but this main emblem of Deity is ever preserved.

in another chariot running in the opposite direction. Four heroes in the vehicle, all with their backs to the horse and driver, are transfixing another who is leaping upon the chariot from behind and trying to stop the revolution of its wheels by seizing one with her mouth. A sort of window, about fourteen inches square and semi-circular at the top, is cut in a slab between the two chariots—the only such orifice for light in the whole room, which must have been lighted from above.

The lower part of these slabs shows traces of fire, but fortunately it has done no great injury to the sculptures, most of which are in better preservation than any hitherto found in Koyunjik.

A few slabs are missing from the south-western corner of the room. On the southern end is a new scene, which determines the question whether or not these lions were trained sons of the forest. A eunuch stands on the top of a large cage, drawing up a grated door from which a lion is escaping, showing that these animals were raised to give the royal household sport. Twenty men, in ten series above one another, stand behind the cage, to direct the general course of the beasts as they come out. The first stone on the eastern side of the room in the order of our search, exhibits six lions and lionesses writhing with arrows in their backs. Horsemen ride over them. The second slab bears a king in his gay chariot with two vizirs and a eunuch, all with spears. The third slab has nine lions on it, each pierced with spears, or arrows, or both. The next has four bearded men leading and holding fierce dogs which seem to desire to scatter the lions. Then come eighteen archers, and spearmen—two by two—to see that no harm comes to the king, and to manage the movements of the lions. Succeeding these is an arched gateway leading out from the turreted walls of the city, and the king is seen at a distance with his attendants in his chariot of state, while a lion is springing upon them—the whole cut in a space of three inches by eight. Men are roaming about in a forest of firs, beautifully executed, either stirring up the game, or trying their skill in killing it. The five slabs toward the northern end of the eastern side of the hall represent the king and his people getting ready for the hunt. Grooms are bringing up the horses; the king and his officers mount the chariot and take their bows and spears; the driver holds one horse having a bell under his throat, a rich bridle and head-gear, his tail curled and tied up, while two men with solid Arab bracelets on their wrists, one holding the ear of a second horse, are backing him into his place. I have spoken of but one horse being attached to the king's chariot hitherto; and only one appears, though it is probably implied that two horses were always employed. Beneath is a row of eunuchs holding staves of office, and in front are spearmen carrying banners, all perpendicular as posts. One slab represents three rows of well bearded soldiers

with the circular shield and low head-dress, followed by others, spears in hand and bare-footed, with high conical helmets and shields reaching from their chins to the ground, such as Xenophon speaks of in his *Anabasis* and *Cyropedia*, where such shields are supposed erroneously to have been Egyptian, unless perchance the Assyrians adopted them from their rivals.* It is certain from the sculptures, that these bucklers were in use in Assyria several hundred years before the time of Xenophon.

Under the soldiers thus armed, is a row of horses led by sleek grooms, and, at the bottom of the slabs, a second series of officers, their rank being indicated by their dress, and bearing standards and heavy arms. Fourteen slabs in an almost perfect state of preservation occupy the eastern wall. There is more variety and artistic skill displayed in this one room than in all the palaces of Nimroud.

At a distance of about forty feet eastward from the room described, at the end of a brick wall, is a globular stone block three feet in diameter, hung with a wreath, its top having a circular depression bounded by a rim—undoubtedly an altar. It stands in front of the finest slab I have ever seen in any Assyrian mound—a block of deep blue gypsum, clear and uniform, bearing three figures of nearly full size. One is apparently a soldier, bare-headed, grasping a huge spear. Next to him is a griffin—a lion's head with opened mouth, a human body, hands and legs, and an eagle's feet, every part delineated with touching beauty. He holds in his raised right hand a dagger, and carries an Arab club, with a knob at one end, in his left. A three-horned priest, or, more properly, a priest with a fillet terminating in three upturned points, which Layard conjectured to indicate the wearer's rank in the priesthood, faces the griffin, having on his head a pointed crown-piece, his long thick hair folded under the fillet behind his neck, his left arm raised over his head, and his right hanging at his side—*without a cone, or basket*. Indeed, no figure, with either of these religious symbols, has been discovered in this palace. Perhaps this slab forms the entrance into a sculptured hall, either a temple, or a place for keeping sacrificial utensils.

On the western side of the hunting-hall there is another rectangular room, representing a war scene, a victory and a triumph. The slabs are considerably injured by fire, but it is clear that the work was executed in the most finished style. Large griffins and priests occupy each side of the doorway. The slabs are generally about eight feet high and half as wide. On the right side, as one passes in from the North, appears a band of warriors on the bank of a river, across which semi-circular boats are ferrying them, quite similar to those

* Book I. Chap. viii.: 'Εχόμενοι δὲ ὀπλῆται σὺν ποδήρεσι ξυλῖνας ἄσπισιν. Αἰγύπτιοι δὲ οὗτοι ἐλέγοντο εἶναι. Cf. Cyr. Book VI. Chap. ii. § 10.

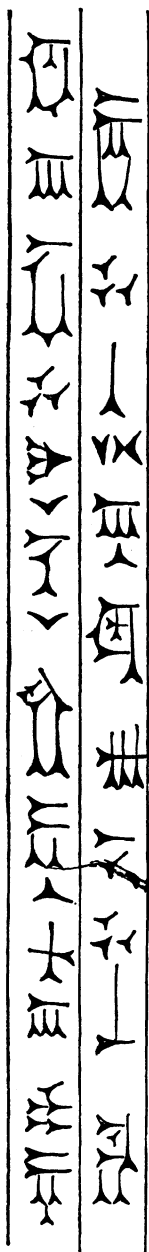
used on the Nile in the days of Pharaoh and Herodotus. They differ materially from the high-prowed barges in which we cross the swollen Tigris at this season. Six ribs of wood, or bundles of reeds, are bound together by eight bands, and one would never think of calling them boats, were they not on a river and moved by rowers.

On the western side of the room is a recess, the back of which is sculptured with the figure of a gigantic monster, having the wings and feet of an eagle and the body of a lion. The head is defaced. The slab is seven feet square. On the sides of the recess are griffins, and beneath one of them is an entirely new combination—a centaur, with the dignified head and uplifted hands of a three-horned priest, and the body, feet and tail of a lion, ready to prostrate any one who would approach the interior of the chamber with irreverence. Like the griffins, this image strikes the beholder with awe. The southern side of the room is occupied with four rows of figures—captive women with their little ones, all carrying on their shoulders or heads, or in their hands, skins of water and provisions for their march, like the *nizam* of the Porte to this day. Officers walk among them, pricking them along with their spears, or beating them with their war-clubs. A few young females in the attitude of supplication, are seated on two-wheeled wagons drawn by oxen, or mules, some with infants on their backs. Two girls are fastened to a high saddle, bound with coarse ropes to a mule's back. All the females have curls hanging down the back of the neck, and are handsome in spite of their tears and sorrowing, bringing to mind, as one sees them looking back at their heroic husbands, the touching scene of the parting of Hector and Andromache.*

The male captives either have their right hands chained two by two together, while they support the loads on their shoulders with their left, or bear great burdens of wood and water under the eye of proud and merciless drivers. They all have short whiskers, while those of the conquerors fall in rich curls on their breasts. On the eastern side of the room is a chariot drawn by two Assyrians, with keys in their hands, in which appears the captive monarch with a child astride his shoulders!

On the left of the entrance is the king in his chariot. A man rides a spirited horse in front and uses his bow, while a double row of archers precede. Beneath are armed men in a forest of palms; below these are others leading captives before them with crossed hands and a disconsolate look. Another slab represents the king in his triumphal car, over whose head is a triangular umbrella, richly embroidered, and supported by two eunuchs on foot behind the vehicle and one within it, there being two handles to the umbrella,

* Iliad, Book VI.



INSCRIPTION ON THE FACE OF THE CASTLE.

while officers of state, and scribes numbering the begging and manacled prisoners, precede him. Between two windows about three feet square, in the eastern wall—the only two of the kind found in any Assyrian palace, is a castle with two rows of bastions, the foundations of which men are loosening with bars, holding at the same time their thickly bossed bucklers over themselves, which are pierced from above with arrows. One party is boldly scaling the battlements by a ladder, spear and shield in hand, some fall headlong from the fortress, and the countenances of all betray the greatest emotion. The warriors have more spirit than any I have elsewhere seen.

On the front of the castle is a beautiful cuneiform inscription, indicating perhaps the name of the conqueror, but more probably that of the captured city, and, if so, of the greatest interest. I send you an accurate copy, which you will notice is read from left to right.

Beneath the castle is a stream filled with fish and dead men. Beyond the second window is an officer beating some captives and forcing their lances into them, who surely have neither a Jewish nor a Babylonish expression. That the captives were not from any quarter North of Nineveh, is evident from the fact that palm-trees abound, and these only. I come to the conclusion, from this fact, and from the dress of the people and the structure of the boats, that this hall represents a victory over the *Egyptians*. A second, but partly defaced inscription is found over the chariot of the king, the beauty of whose robes and ornaments nothing can exceed. When the inscriptions of this chamber are read, it is probable we shall have a valuable addition to ancient history.

Another room, partly uncovered, still further to the West, represents the flight of the enemy in great terror on horses and in chariots, while some try to conceal themselves among the date-trees where the victors pierce them with spears, or cut off their heads with Kurdish-like daggers. The chariot-driver guides his horse by a single line attached to the animal's head just below his ears, which answers also the purpose of a whip.

Guarding the entrance into the scene of the final victory is a peculiar monster; he has half the body and the feet of a lion, and the head and upper extremities of a man, his right hand grasping a gigantic spear. A broken slab within represents the king seated under a tent before which women stand with suppliant countenances and hands. Above the tent are inscribed three lines about two feet in length, doubtless making mention of the victor and the victory.

Seventy feet South of the lion-chamber is another room just opening, guarded like all the other halls by a savage griffin and a priest. The room is not yet cleared, but one scene is uncovered, a battle in which, in addition to other modes of fighting, are introduced camels, on the backs of which are two men—one an archer, the other the manager of “the ship of the desert.”*

Various copper utensils, with glass and earthen ware, have been found in the four rooms I have described, and there is no doubt that other objects of interest will be disclosed as the excavations progress.

The palace is built on no mean scale, and when completely uncovered will be a spot of great attraction. Numerous English and French travellers will look upon it, but I fear I shall see no Americans there except my companions in missionary toil. To them the recreation is very inviting amid their arduous, but pleasant labors.

It is expected that the slabs will be removed to the British Museum soon after drawings of the sculptures have been secured. The artist is now on his back at one of our houses, perhaps near death.

Through the politeness of Layard and Rawlinson we have been able to send several large sculptures from Nimroud, with inscribed bricks, to Yale, Amherst, Williams, Union and Dartmouth Colleges, and I suppose most of them have already reached their destination.

I notice you refer to an article of mine in the *Missionary Herald* of April last, as settling the signification of *Melek Tâus*.† Dr. Perkins has written me that he is confident he was mistaken in rendering the phrase “Mighty Angel.” The explanation of Dr. Hyde has some plausibility. Since I wrote the letter to which you referred, I have learned something more of the Yezedee faith, and, if you desire, I will communicate to you what my business as public physician enables me to ascertain from the numerous dignitaries of that singular sect who apply to me for medicine.

* Xenophon's *Cyropedia*, B. VI. Ch. 11. “They have camels on which they ride up to us, and one of which a hundred horses will not bear the sight of.”

† See *Journ. Am. Or. Soc.*, vol. iii. p. 502.